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25 April 1955

MEMORANDUM FOR: Project Review Committee
THROUGH: Deputy Director/Intelligence
SUBJECT: MINICARD Project

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Transmitted herewith is a "Project Outline" which recommends the purchase under contract of MINICARD equipment from [redacted] at an estimated cost not to exceed [redacted]

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CONCURRENCE:

Chief, Management Staff

Date

ACTION BY APPROVING AUTHORITY:

APPROVED:**

Deputy Director/Intelligence

*Funds are available to finance the proposed project within the DD/I allocation for the current fiscal year. Proposed contracting arrangements have been coordinated with

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1. OBJECTIVE:

To conduct in OCD an early and large-scale test of a family of data handling equipment known as MINICARD which is believed capable of substantially improving CIA's Intellofax System as a principal instrument in support of intelligence research. MINICARD promises to contribute improved means for collation of intelligence data, greater speed and flexibility in the conduct of document searches and economies in operation, notably spacewise.

2. ORIGIN AND POLICY GUIDANCE:

Under OCD is assigned the following functions:

- a. Design, develop, and operate such central reference facilities as will ensure that the content of all available intelligence materials is immediately accessible to all offices of the Agency in support of intelligence production; and
- b. In collaboration with the Management Staff, conduct research into, and advise Agency components upon, the application of machine techniques and special devices to problems of information control and bibliographic research.

3. SITUATION:

- a. Advent of MINICARD

storage and retrieval system utilizing the microphotographic medium in the form of a piece of film, 16mm x 32mm, called the MINICARD. Alphabetic-numeric information and photographic images can be carried on the MINICARD and the composite product produced in sufficient copies to permit deposit of a complete record at each significant code location. The system makes available the advantages of discrete item control, multiple access, the flexibility of electronic searching techniques and the permanence and inviolability of film storage. A comprehensive search-equipment system is now mid-way in development. It includes various types of apparatus for handling, storing, sorting, and delivery of MINICARD data to researchers. Selection from very large numbers of MINICARDS is to be facilitated by pre-sorting and storage of the MINICARDS into as many groups as necessary in order to keep the searching time to an acceptable minimum.

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b. Status of the CIA Intellofax System

25X1 The principal features of MINICARD are paralleled by and, present document handling techniques evolved since 1947 in CIA's Intellofax System. The latter comprises an Intelligence Subject Code which is immediately applicable to MINICARD; a full range of IBM equipment for storage and retrieval of document subject codes on punched cards; facsimile equipment for production of intellofax "tapes" listing document citations for researchers; facilities for storage on and retrieval of documents from film; and, finally, a Library Reference system employing personnel trained in the utilization of the composite system on CIA and IAC research projects.

MINICARD proposes to combine the storage of subject codes and document images now handled separately under Intellofax. It eliminates storage problems now critical in the punched card and hard-copy document phases of Intellofax by taking fullest advantage of new developments in electronics and in film production and use. Finally, from these new developments it expects to achieve urgently needed processing and retrieval rates many times faster than the best of which Intellofax is capable today.

The urgency of the storage, retrieval, and cost problems facing Intellofax in the immediate future cannot be overemphasized. Its growth to present scale has been accomplished by multiplication of IBM equipment rentals, storage cabinets, space units and personnel. Though declining, researchers' requests for total searches of the seven year Intellofax product still amount to 60% of the flow. Compliance with these requests in categories now numbering tens of thousands of cards is inevitably lengthening search time, multiplying overlap problems and overloading users with insufficiently refined answers. During the past two years the possibilities for solution by multiplication have generally disappeared, particularly in the categories of space and personnel. Until permanent relief can be achieved along lines incorporated in MINICARD, OCD has no alternative but to gradually reduce the range, speed, and quality of the Intellofax Service.

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